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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [KCRS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: SAMARRA HAS NEW CITY COUNCIL
AND ELECTED CHAIRMAN

REF: BAGHDAD 727

Classified By: PRT Salah ad Din Team Leader Rick Bell
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din reporting cable.

Summary

[1](#)2. (C) After weeks of backroom maneuvering, and with the full support of the Provincial Council (PC), Samarra has a new 21 member City Council (CC) that was selected by the consensus of the Samarra Mayor, local Sheiks, and a faction of proactive members of the previous CC. The new CC met conditions set forth by the PC that it be representative of the city and composed of "good" people. It has the PC's blessing and will likely be officially named at the next PC meeting, likely March 18. On March 12, the new CC voted in a secret ballot to elect local Director of Education Omar

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Mohammed Hussein as the new CC Chair. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (C) For weeks the previous CC Chair Mizur Flayed Hasen Al Bassi, who retained membership on the new CC but lost his chairman position, and his supporters lobbied for the PC to accept their proposed list of members. That list comprised many members who were directly responsible for the dysfunction and corruption that were the hallmark of the old CC. The PC made clear that any list must be representative of Samarra, which the PC felt Mizur's list was not, and held out for a more representative list. Over the past week, the Mayor, influential local Sheiks, and a faction of "good" members of the previous CC actively developed a list and presented it to the PC, which blessed it.

City Council Chair Elected in Secret Ballot

[1](#)4. (C) On March 12, the new CC convened to elect a new chairman. Three names were put forward. (Note: The names were all known in advance and appear to be reflective of the leading factions in the new CC. End Note.) An Election Board, comprised of a newly arrived judge, the Mayor, and a city council member, was named without objection. Eighteen of 21 members of the new PC were present for the vote. After Mizur raised a number of objections, which were dismissed by the Mayor and others present, PC Deputy Chair Ismael Nabil, who was in Tikrit, phoned in to the gathering to explain at length the legitimacy of the proceedings and to deputize the Samarra Mayor to represent the PC for the rest of the session. He closed by telling the new CC to cast its vote.

[1](#)5. (C) After a brief delay to retrieve the official list of new CC members and to verify the list's accuracy, a roll was taken so that all assembled could see who was present. The Election Board Judge created and distributed ballots to each

of the 18 members present. After a few silent minutes, the Judge counted the ballots, read the name on the ballot, and declared Omar Mohammed Hussein the winner. He received 12 of the 18 possible votes. As one CC member began to protest the vote result, another CC member crossed the room and embraced the newly elected CC Chair. Other CC members did the same ending any dissent. After the Judge explained that he would send a certification to the PC, the newly elected CC Chair addressed the group saying that he would work hard for the people of Samarra and urged all present to do the same.

Comment

16. (C) The appointment of the new CC and democratic election of a new CC Chair are huge steps in the revitalization of Samarra. In the short term, it is entirely possible that any disruption to the entrenched corruption of the old CC could pose risks to the newly selected CC members. However, at no small danger to themselves, the new CC will provide desperately needed legitimacy at a time of improved security and during the reconstruction of the Shia Golden Mosque in predominantly Sunni Samarra. The interest of the PC in Samarra (reftel) is real, but immediate results, including the initiation of provincial capital-development projects, is necessary to take advantage of the improved security environment in the city. End Comment.

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